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ABSTRACT

The Holdeman Mennonites live in many states of the United States, and in Canada. They represent a unique culture with definite beliefs and philosophies. The physical appearance of the Holdeman Mennonites readily identifies who they are. Too frequently, outside viewers feel that the Old Order Amish with their horse drawn carriages, horse drawn farm machinery, and unique dress represent a Mennonite philosophy. The Holdeman Mennonites differ much in their thinking from the Old Order Amish. A discussion of the differences covering the areas of physical appearance and dress, religious services, the world of work, the home setting, and philosophy of life is presented. (BZ)

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THE HOLDEMAN MENNONITES IN SOCIETY

by

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THE HOLDEMAN MENNONITES IN SOCIETY

The Holdeman Mennonites live in many states of the United States and Canada. They represent a unique culture with definite beliefs and philosophies. The physical appearance of the Holdeman Mennonites readily identifies who they are. Too frequently, viewers in society feel that Old Order Amish with their horse drawn carriages, horse drawn farm machinery, and unique dress represent a Mennonite philosophy. The Holdeman Mennonites, a conservative group, differ much in their thinking from the Old Order Amish. Comparisons will be made between the two sects of Mennonites.

Physical Appearance of the Holdeman Mennonites Versus the Amish

Holdeman Mennonite men wear beards and mustaches, whereas Old Order Amish (hereinafter called the Amish) have beards and no mustaches. The Holdeman and Amish men wear no ties, including the time when religious services are held. The former generally wear blue suits, plain in color, to religious services. Although, brown suits with stripes are also permitted. The shirts are usually white in color, although a few men wear striped shirts. Amish men never wear stripes or checks in their clothes. Black is a very

popular color for coats and trousers. Shirts are white in color for religious services. For every day work, Amish men wear white, yellow, brown, or blue plain shirts, with a single color of suspender. Blue denim trousers are worn for working on the farm or other jobs Amish men may perform.

Holdeman women wear dresses with high necklines as do Amish women. Holdeman dresses contain conservative designs, such as flowers. The dresses can be of different colors, such as blue, green, gray, and yellow. Amish women wear dresses of plain colors--no stripes or checks.

Holdeman women's dresses extend slightly below the elbow, whereas Amish dresses extend nearly to the wrist. The length of Holdeman dresses is slightly below the knees. Amish dresses extend down to the ankles.

Both Holdeman and Amish women wear prayer caps. Holdeman women have small black prayer caps bobby pinned to the hair. The black prayer cap is worn to the back of the head. For church services, Holdeman women wear black shawl coverings which cover all of the hair. Amish women wear white prayer caps continuously.

Holdeman men have buttons on the outer clothing, while Amish men have hooks and eyes to fasten coats worn.

Religious Services

The Holdeman have regular church buildings for religious services. These buildings may look no different, as compared to other rural churches. However, no crosses or other religious symbols appear in the church buildings. English is the language of the church, home, and society. No musical instruments, including pianos and organs, are allowed in the church building. Electric lights and cushions on pews are definitely in evidence. A special hymnal The Christian Hymnal published in particular for Holdeman churches is used in religious services. Revival hymns are common in the hymnal. Men sit on one side and women on the other during church services. Very small children sit with the mothers. Later on, the girl sits with the mother, while the boy sits with the father. Services are held Sunday morning and evening, as well as for midweek Bible study on Wednesday evenings. Giving of testimonies after a service is common. These are generally given by men.

The minister tends to preach on the importance of the hereafter. People in the congregation are warned not to desire the here and the now to the exclusion of heaven. Definite sins are preached against, such as coveting, desiring wealth, lusting, wearing short dresses by women,

swearing, belonging to lodges, and young men in military service. The Holdeman young men in times of conscription do alternative (conscientious objector) service rather than military service.

Amish have no church buildings for religious services. The house or barn of an Amish family is used. Preaching (religious) services are held every other Sunday. Sunday Schools are conducted on Sundays when no church services are held. All church services, weddings, and funerals are conducted in the German language. Pennsylvania Dutch is spoken in the home setting and with other Amish families. English is spoken to communicate with the larger society.

Amish, like the Holdeman, have no crosses or religious symbols in their services. No musical instruments are used. The German songbook contains no notes. Unison singing is emphasized, whereas Holdeman attempt to sing according to the notes in their hymnal. Three to four hymns take approximately one hour to sing in Amish worship. Oral tradition is used to hand down from generation to generation the means of singing Amish hymns. A type of chant is used by the Amish in singing. Holdeman hymns are sung at the usual rate of speed of other Protestant churches.

Men and women sit on opposite sides in a house or in a barn for Old Order Amish services, in the same manner as the

Holdeman do in their churches. Amish ministers warn parishioners to be separate from the world. This separation involves not participating in worldly affairs, military endeavors, secret societies and lodge membership, revelry and drinking, and thievery, among other evils. Sins enumerated by the Holdeman and the Amish are quite similar and many. There are many taboos for Holdeman and Amish.

The World of Work

Both Holdeman and Amish would have as their number one objective for all their people to be involved in farming. However, both groups have seen an increased number of their young people, as well as older individuals, go into other lines of work. Carpentry, bricklaying, working in factories in rural areas, and cottage industries have become important. Holdeman young people, in particular, also work in cafeterias, grocery stores, shopping centers, feed mills, and automobile repair shops. They also do plumbing and electrical work.

Hard work, diligence, and frugality are important to both the Holdeman and the Amish. On farms, Holdeman use modern farm machinery, if adequate money is available. The modern machines include tractors with electric lights, power steering and brakes, as well as hydraulic lifts; self

propelled combines with lights, power steering and brakes, as well as hydraulic lifts (air-conditioned cabs may be on both the tractor and the combine); disks and field tillers on rubber tires and a hydraulic lift attachment on each implement; and grain drills on rubber tires and hydraulically operated to raise or lower the depth of seeding. Other modern implements on Holdeman farms are mowers, swathers, and ballers to cut and bale hay. Trucks and pickups are utilized to haul livestock, grain, and hay.

Cows are milked by machines operated by electricity. Beef animals are fed using an electrically operated ensilage unloader from a silo. The feed then is brought down from a silo without human beings shoveling the silage or feed to the beef animals. Modern machines are also used to help in hog operations. Thus, hog confinement pens, augurs to augur grain to self-feeders for pigs, and automatic waterers provide water for the swine operation.

Holdeman tend to be quite self-sufficient in raising their own food. Large gardens provide food for immediate use in summer, as well as home canned items for winter. Beef and pork consumed are usually home grown for those Holdeman who live on farms.

Amish farming methods are quite different from those of the Holdeman. Amish use draft horses, rather than tractors,

to pull plows, disks, harrows, and grain drills. To harvest wheat, oats, or barley, a grain binder, pulled by draft horses, is used. The binder cuts the grain and makes small sheaves or bundles. The bundles, about eight to ten in number, are placed into a shock. The act of doing so is called shocking bundles. The shocks are later pitched by a person with a pitchfork onto a wagon pulled by a team of draft horses. The bundles are then pitched into a threshing machine which separates the grain from the straw and chaff. The grain is threshed onto a wagon pulled by a team of draft (work) horses. The grain is then shoveled into a bin by hand. Holdeman use grain augurs operated by an electric engine to get the grain from the truck bed (box) into a metal grain bin. Amish use no electricity on the farm, home, or in school.

There is one Old Order Amish community in which draft horses have almost become an item of the past. At Kalona, Iowa, tractors with steel wheels only (not on rubber tires) are taking over farm work from the utilization of draft horses. Hay balers, rakes to put hay into rows, and mowers to cut hay are used. However, each implement must be on steel wheels. In Kalona, Iowa, a mechanic changes Amish farm machines purchased, if on rubber, to being on steel

wheels. Transportation of people is still done with the use of traditional horses and carriages, near Kalona, Iowa.

Holdeman Homes Versus the Old Order Amish

Holdeman homes have electricity. Electric ranges and hot water heaters are then in evidence. The use of radio and television are taboo. Amish homes have no electricity. Thus, it definitely voids the use of radio, television, electric ranges, automatic clothes washers and driers, hot water heaters, and dishwashers. Electric lights are then used in Holdeman homes, whereas Amish use kerosene and natural gas to provide light in homes. Amish use kerosene or wood to heat their homes in winter. Natural gas is used in some homes for cooking.

Running water, hot and cold, is used in Holdeman homes. A Holdeman house can be as modern as any home in the United States. However, prestige with large, extravagant houses, is taboo. A comfortable, modern house, large enough for the parents and children is adequate. Three to six children make up a Holdeman family together with the parents. Divorce is exceedingly rare. Amish houses need to be large since eight to twelve children is an ideal. Birth control methods are taboo in Amish culture. Amish homes have cold

running water, gravity flow pumped by windmills and not by electricity.

Eighth grade education is terminal for both Holdeman and Amish. Each sponsors their own parochial schools. Holdeman make a few exceptions, such as a woman can attend college to become a nurse (R.N.). Audio visual aids, such as slides, filmstrips, films, and transparencies are not used in either Holdeman or Amish schools. Since eighth grade is terminal education for both Holdeman and Amish, reading materials are minimal in the home setting. The Holdeman home will contain English Bibles, a few farm journals, and maybe a weekly or daily newspaper. Amish will have German Bibles, a farm journal, and maybe a weekly newspaper. Abstract learnings are not emphasized by either the Holdeman or the Amish. Rather, life consists of action, doing, and progressing. Thus, with farming as a number one goal in life, the Holdeman or Amish must complete each operation diligently and on time. Book farming is not emphasized or encouraged. A <u>doing</u> approach is emphasized by both groups in farming or other kinds of approved work. Young people becoming actors, singers, dancers, comedians, university professors, public school teachers and administrators would be frowned upon and be taboo by Holdeman and Amish.

Both Holdeman and Amish have persons from their own faiths who teach students in parochial schools.

Philosophy of Life

For both Holdeman and Amish, rural values rather than urban are emphasized. Farming is at the apex of occupations prefered and is superior to other jobs and professions. Religious rather than secular perceptions receive high status in Holdeman and Amish societies. Rural values of Holdeman and Amish are grounded in religious beliefs. Both Holdeman and Amish emphasize distinct roles separating men from women. The woman is a housewife and mother to children. The Holdeman married woman is much more likely to have a job outside the home as compared to the Amish woman. Although, for both groups, the ideal role of a woman is to be a housewife. The Holdeman and Amish man is the breadwinner in the family. Farming is the ideal occupation. However, in both groups, men are increasingly employed away from the occupation of farming.

Both Holdeman and Amish do not believe book learning in formal schools beyond the eighth grade is necessary to become good farmers and housewives. A school of the four r's (reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion) is emphasized in both Holdeman and Amish parochial schools.

Transmitting culture is important to Holdeman and Amish. A Holdeman boy is to accept the beliefs and values of adults of his faith and church group. An Amish boy is to take on the cultural beliefs and values of his religious affiliations. Also, Holdeman girls as well as Amish girls are strongly reinforced to become enculturated to the role of a housewife, preferably on a farm. The farm crisis has modified major objectives of both Holdeman and Amish. Low prices for grain, and in selected years low prices for livestock produced, has made for an increase of Holdeman and Amish leaving the farm for other kinds of work. The work chosen must harmonize with Holdeman and Amish philosophy.

In Closing

The writer has made numerous comparisons between the Holdeman and Old Order Amish. Both are primary groups. Within each of these primary groups, close relationships exist. When ill fortune comes along, neighbors help out to do work for those experiencing disaster such as death and poor health, as well as from nature. If the husband, for example, dies or has ill health, members of the congregation will help out to do the farm work, with no costs involved. Or, if natural disasters occur, church members will build anew or repair a farm building. Assistance given to those

who experience need comes from primary groups, not from governmental aid and other impersonal sources.

In the manuscript, the writer has contrasted the Holdeman and Amish in the following areas:

1. physical appearance and dress.
2. religious services.
3. the world of work.
4. the home setting.
5. philosophy of life.

Selected References

1. The Budget, published weekly at Sugarcreek, Ohio 44681, contains news items largely of Old Order Amish. The entire paper is devoted to news of the Mennonites.

2. Hostetler, John. Amish Society, published by Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, has up-to-date scholarly content on the Old Order Amish.

3. The Mennonite Encyclopedia. Hillsboro, Kansas: The Mennonite Brethern Publishing Company. These four volumes contain scholarly content on The Holdeman and Amish, as well as other Mennonite sects.

4. The Mennonite Weekly Review. Contains scholarly content written weekly on the Holdeman, the Amish, and other Mennonite groups. Published in Newton, Kansas 67114.

5. Mennonite Life, published monthly, contains scholarly content on diverse Mennonite groups. Mennonite Life is published by Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas 67117.